



**PRESS RELEASE**  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**By Sgt. Marisa Lindsay**

**The fast track to a commission for Guard members**

**ANCHORAGE, Alaska** – The Alaska Army National Guard’s Recruiting and Retention unit has begun utilizing a federal program, alongside their in-use state program, as an alternative method for recruits to earn a commission in the Army.

This is the first year that the AKARNG is using the program as a commissioning source for their non-prior-service enlistees.

“The difference between the state’s officer candidate school and the federal program is very small, but when I took over as the Officer Strength Manager in 2013, I felt that we should use all available avenues in regards to commissioning Soldiers.” said Maj. David Jurva, AKARNG deputy chief of staff for personnel. “In both programs, you will go out of state for the school and be expected to perform at a high, intense level, but in most cases this federal program will give our Soldiers the opportunity to commission much faster.”

The state program is a reserve component program that mandates recruits accomplish phase zero of their commissioning program in Alaska between basic training and officer candidate school. This process in its entirety could potentially take up to one year.

The federal program allows the Soldier to streamline his or her commissioning process by attending officer candidate school directly after basic training graduation. What this means for those interested in earning their commission with the AKARNG is that without any prior military experience, a commission has the potential to be earned in a mere five months.

“We are looking for the whole Soldier concept ... applicants with a college degree, earned with at least a 3.0 grade point average,” Jurva said. “They need to be physically fit, mentally tough and the have right attitude.”

Those qualities were found in 2nd Lt. Keerstin Beitter, who is now awaiting departure for flight school as a member of 1-207th Aviation, Alaska Army National Guard. Beitter is the first Alaska National Guard Soldier to successfully complete the federal commissioning program, graduating from basic training in August, and then earning her commission after completing officer candidate school Nov. 6, 2014, from Fort Benning, Georgia.

“It’s been a huge change for me and my family,” said Beitter, who is the first in her family to join the military and a native of Alaska. “Although my parents were nervous when I first

told them of my decision to join, they are excited now that they see these positive changes in me and that the military is investing so much in me and my future.”

Beitter leaves for flight school, which is 14 months long in Fort Rucker, Alabama, in April.

“If the Army recruits the right people, like Lt. Beitter, we can teach them to be leaders,” Jurva said. “The Army defines leadership as a developable skill, in that it can be learned, monitored and improved. Now that we are starting to pull people into the federal program, we want to find more people who think they have what it takes to use it.”

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### **Cutlines:**

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2nd Lt. Keerstin Beitter, with 1-207th Aviation, Alaska Army National Guard, stands alongside her mother, Kristina Murakami, and Alaska Army National Guard recruiters Capt. Terri Lopez and Maj. David Jurva at her Officer Candidate School graduation ceremony in Fort Benning, Georgia, Nov. 6. Beitter is the first Soldier to use the federal program as a commissioning source for non-prior-service enlistees. Photo Courtesy 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Keerstin Beitter

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2nd Lt. Keerstin Beitter, with 1-207th Aviation, Alaska Army National Guard, is pinned by her mother, Kristina Murakami, during her Officer Candidate School graduation ceremony in Fort Benning, Georgia, Nov. 6. Beitter is the first Soldier to use the federal program as a commissioning source for non-prior-service enlistees. Photo Courtesy 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Keerstin Beitter